

BLUNT INSTRUMENTS

NUMER JEDEN (#1)

NOVEMBER 1986

Greetings! Welcome to *Blunt Instruments*, an obviously self-conscious 'zine which promises to make you wince with embarrassment at some of the editor's more painfully forced attempts at humor.

Actually, I hate to say it, but the previous paragraph is only partly a joke. I have wanted to start a 'zine of my own ever since I joined this hobby a few short years ago. Fortunately for my ego, the presence of so many excellent 'zines deterred me for a long while, as I felt that I had nothing more to offer than was already being presented. To be honest, although I still feel that I cannot hope to match the quality of many of the existing 'zines, the creative outlet that (I imagine) publishing brings has proven to be too attractive a prospect. With this rather timid beginning, I present *Blunt Instruments*. To those of you who didn't respond to this with "What?! Another #@&*\$% 'zine!!!", welcome. There are a lot of great publications out there; with time, perhaps *BI* will join them.

By way of introduction, I am Bruce Geryk, a second-year student in Slavic Languages & Literatures at the University of Chicago. The address here is 5748 South Blackstone Avenue, #310, Chicago, Illinois, 60637. Telephone: (312) 324-6460. Blessed as I am with ample word-processing and printing facilities here at the University (more on this later), I hope to run this 'zine on four-week deadlines. Should this thing be more of a success than I currently envision, circumstances may dictate that I send flyers out to the players before the actual 'zine is mailed. The only thing that may change this is if I get a substantial response from Canadian players. For some reason, the Canadians I have come in contact with in this hobby have been, as a whole, unusually pleasant sorts. For this reason, should these pleasant types deem this publication to be worth their time, I will run a five-week deadline game, as postal conditions between our two countries are less than ideal. In fact, should our overseas friends find some worth in my missives, I will open a nine-week deadline game, or perhaps something a bit more interesting. In fact, I would love to run a completely non-*Diplomacy* game. Anyone interested in *United*?

As far as content is concerned, I only have a few concrete ideas about this 'zine. One of them is emphasis on non-game material. There will be games, of course (see *The Arena* this issue), but much of what I read a 'zine for is its letters and tidbits, and I will try to provide the same kind of reading enjoyment for those of you who like this sort of thing. Letters, especially, will find a home here. As far as topics are concerned, I have some specific interests, though I don't want to limit letters to these subjects. I came to postal *Diplomacy* as a wargamer, previously interested only in those strange games which have a lot of little cardboard counters and those funny, hexagonal-grid boards. Lately, however, I have pretty much dropped out of the postal wargame mainstream in favor of the *Diplomacy* version. Should anyone out there want to help me keep in touch, by all means, do!

Above all, though, I enjoy reading chat 'zines, especially those done by articulate editors (er, I suppose I have just excluded myself). Unfortunately, this particular editor is not particularly articulate or particularly interesting. While some editors can produce reams of fascinating reading, I am afraid that I do not fit into this category. Nevertheless, I love to type so much that I will simply go on and on if given the opportunity. Should you not care for this, you would be well-advised to send in your own material for publication (or just avoid subscribing altogether!). I hope to print a fair amount of material from the readers, should they be so kind as to submit some.

That, then, is a general outline. If you are interested in hearing more, subscriptions are \$1.10/issue, or \$10.00/ten. Since this issue is going out to a fair number of overseas subscribers, I am really interested in building up an overseas readership. I really encourage non-Americans (that includes Canadians, guys!) to give *BI* a try. If you do, I'll send you twelve issues *airmail* for the same \$10.00 price. Interested? Keep turning pages....

the arena

This section of **BI**, known as *The Arena*, shall be home to the many *Diplomacy* games that will eventually be played here. Actually, just two. For now. Perhaps later, when I'm an old and wizened GM, and novice GM's flock to seek my advice on how to best run a *Diplomacy* game, and the entire hobby pays me homage whenever anyone opens a new game or devises a dashingly innovative set of houserules, I will expand my offerings. Not just yet, though.

I hereby announce, therefore, the official opening of two sections of that thing we call the game of *Diplomacy*. The pages of history await fourteen lucky aspiring European conquerors. As an added bonus, those of you with the foresight to sign up by next issue will pay no gamefee, thus stunning the rest of the world with your daring act of economization. Really, if you're going to play somewhere, wouldn't it make sense to join here and save yourself some cash? Sure it would....

Games, however, need standbys (although I would love it if they didn't), so I would like to build up a fairly large standby list. To facilitate this, anyone volunteering to stand by in **BI** will get a free issue. Taking a standby position will, likewise, give you a free ish, and finishing a position as a standby will get you three. Can you resist this? Of course not.

To tell you the truth, though, I would really like to open a section of something completely unrelated to *Diplomacy*, in addition to the two games already mentioned. Variants are out, as I have little interest in running one, and those of you inclined toward that spectrum of the hobby would be well advised to check into **Bushwacker** and see what games are currently being offered there. No, I'd like to do something else. As they say on Monty Python: "And now for something completely different." In this vein, I have already mentioned the possibility of *United*. Unfortunately, as I understand it, this takes quite a bit of time and energy on the part of the GM. I would not mind doing this, as long as I knew exactly what I was getting into from the beginning. Anyone care to enlighten me?

Being a wargamer, I have played (and enjoyed) many more traditional-style boardgames. I am not terribly interested in running a conventional wargame within these pages, but several of the more general-interest games that I own have multi-player pbm potential, and I'd like to try them out. I'm dying to try out *1830* by mail, if any of you railroad-game buffs out there are interested. *Titan* or *Circus Maximus* are others that I do not get enough chances to play, and would enjoy GM'ing. Also, has anyone ever played TSR's wonderful *The Awful Green Things From Outer Space*? This has to be one of my favorite games of all time, although I don't know how well it would adapt to pbm play. Perhaps we could put a crew together from the readers of **BI**, and pit them against an unknown Awful Green Thing commander. This is one of my more esoteric interests, so I won't be surprised if *Green Things* doesn't go over too well. What I'm trying to say here is that I'm open to suggestions. If you'd like to see something run here (especially one of the games I've mentioned), drop me a line. Just don't try to get me to run *Third Reich* or something ridiculous like that. I've had enough of that one to last me for a while. Well, almost enough (heh, heh).

These choices are, basically, up to you. I will run whatever there is the most interest for, excluding *Diplomacy* variants. (Well, there is one variant I'd consider running, and that's "Rather Silly Dip." Conrad von Metzke is currently running a section in *Costaguana*, which I am playing in. The rules are hilarious: full of silly twists and just plain weirdness, they should make for a very entertaining game. Should anyone want to hear more, write to me, and I'll send you a copy of the rules.) If enough people want to play a game which I don't own, I'll buy it, provided that the cost isn't prohibitive. As a wargamer, I am used to adapting seemingly non-pbm-able games to the mails. (I'm currently on a fifteen-player postal odyssey through Victory Games' *Vietnam*, but that's another story entirely.) In short, if you want to play any particular game, this is your chance to let me know about it. I might even be conned into pulling out a multiplayer wargame, provided that it isn't too big. *War & Peace* might be nice, as might *Cold War* or *Pax Britannica*. Let me know what you'd like to see.

Anyone ever heard of *Wabbit Wampage*?

...and they're off!

This first installment of *The Arena* even has a game. 1985AQ is (was) an orphan, having been left homeless by the fold of James Early's *The Razor's Edge*. Consequently, there will be no game fee charged for this game, and players in 1985AQ do not have to subscribe to *Blunt Instruments*, although it would make me very happy if they did. In general, my policy for orphans will be to offer the players a sub, but give them the option of receiving a flyer *containing their game only* if they prefer that. Hear that, guys (and gal)? I am allowing you to make a very foolish mistake and forego subscribing to *BI*. Players in games which begin in *BI* must subscribe for the duration of their game, as per the houserules. Standbys for orphans may also elect not to subscribe.

James had named this game "The Trees." This does not correspond to the *BI* system of naming games after boroughs of Warsaw, but I'll forgive James this time. Still, "The Trees" does seem a trifle, well, dull. Hmm...maybe if we changed it just a little, to "The Integral Trees".... Sound better, Niven fans? (Yes, I have been known to read science fiction on occasion, but only while alone in my room with the door locked.)

The last adjudicated season for this game was Fall, 1904. I am reprinting the supply center chart so that everyone can clearly see who owns what. There was one NMR for the current season, and Jim Burgess kindly provided me with a USOS standby (thanks, Jim!). With this, we should be ready to roll once again!

1985AQ Supply Center Chart — 1904

AUSTRIA	<u>vie</u>	.....	0, out
ENGLAND	<u>edi</u> , <u>lvp</u>	.....	0, out
FRANCE	par, mar, bre, spa, por, <u>ven</u> , EDI, LVP, ROM	.....	8, +2
GERMANY	ber, kie, mun, hol, den, swe, bel, lon, WAR, NWY	.....	10, +2
ITALY	nap, tun, <u>rom</u> , <u>tri</u> , VEN	.....	3, -1
RUSSIA	stp, mos, <u>war</u> , <u>bud</u> , <u>nwy</u> , VIE	.....	3, -2
TURKEY	con, ank, smy, bul, gre, ser, rum, sev, TRI, BUD	.....	10, +2

1985AQ

The Integral Trees

Winter, 1904

Fra: Builds F BRE, F MAR. Ger: Builds A BER, A MUN. Ita: Removes F wes.
Rus: Removes A mos, F stp(nc). Tur: NBR. Plays two short.

Spring, 1905

FRANCE (*Melinda Holley, P.O. Box 2793, Huntington, WV, 25727*) A rom S F tyn-NAP (d,r
tus,otb), A spa-GAS, F bre-MID, F edi-CLY, F lvp-IRI, F mid-WES, F mar-LYO, F tyn-NAP.

GERMANY (*Ernest Hakey III, 63 Medford St., Medford, MA 02155*) A yor-LON, A war-MOS, A LVN S A war-MOS, A BER-sil, A pru-WAR, A mun-BOH, A TYO S A mun-BOH, F den-KIE, F bot-STP(SC), F NWY S F bot-STP(SC).

ITALY (*Dave McCrumb, Rt. 1, Box 109, New Castle, VA 24127*) F nap-ROM, A APU S F nap-ROM, A VEN S F nap-ROM.

RUSSIA (*John Crow, 13750 Maham Rd. #1178, Dallas, TX 75240*) A VIE-boh, A GAL-sil, A UKR-gal.

TURKEY (*Michael Cox, 1625 Travis St., Columbus, TX 78934*) **NMR!** A SEV H, F BLA H, A RUM H, A SER H, A BUD H, A TRI H, F ADR H, F ION H.

Now, if everyone will kindly turn the page to the "Gamenotes" section, we can wrap up the loose ends....

Actually, before we get to the gamenotes, there is some

PRESS — Russia: They found the old man deep in the trees. His body lay broken in a thicket; he was dying.

“My God, it’s the Czar,” said one.

“Closer,” gasped the once-regal monarch. His lungs wheezed, his words were barely audible. “Come closer and I shall tell you how I became a one-dot Russia....”

They leaned forward in anticipation. The dying man, with his last breath, told his story.

“It all went sour in ’04. Oh, that hurts.” The Czar weakly rolled to one side to attempt a little more comfort and the others could see the plethora of stab wounds in his back—the easily distinguishable marks of Turkish sabres, German daggers, even French paté-knife strokes.

“... in ’04 and the Kaiser, my good companion and erstwhile ally turned against me. My pleas to the French fell on deaf ears, the Italians and Austrians were caught up in internal struggle, and the Turks ... the Turks,” the Czar fingered a fresh sabre wound, “the Turks plundered Sevastopol.”

The group, tired of standing, sat around the Czar as he continued his dying gasp.

“Sure is wordy for a dying man,” whispered one to the others.

“A little respect for the dying,” snapped the Czar.

Germany to Turkey: You build fleets, man? Not me.

Germany to France: Looks like three superpowers to me. Let’s make it just two and call it a draw.

Germany to Italy: Sorry, but it looks like you’re in a squeeze, eh?

Germany to Russia: Twill soon be good-bye, but I’d like to thank you for playing a fine game all the way.

Germany to England & Turkey: R.I.P.

***** GAMENOTES *****

1. The deadline for Fall, 1905 orders is **8PM Central Standard Time, December 5, 1986**. Orders may be phoned in at any time up to the deadline, although I would really prefer that you call by 11PM (except on the deadline day, of course). As I state in the houserules, there is no guarantee that you’ll be able to reach me in my apartment (students are notorious for this), so consider yourselves forewarned. My address and telephone number can be found on the front page of this issue, but I’ll repeat them here: Bruce Geryk, 5748 S. Blackstone Ave. #310, Chicago, IL 60637—(312) 324-6460.
2. Jim Burgess has provided me with a USOS standby for Turkey. He is Fred Chang, 822 N. Sycamore Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90038-3317.
3. Players in this game (as in all orphans in **BI**) do not have to subscribe in order to play. Should you choose not to subscribe, you will get your adjudications and gamenotes via a separate flyer containing only your game. Likewise, standbys called for orphan positions do not have to subscribe. (After all, it wasn’t your choice to be housed here, so you can be spared my endless ramblings.) By the way, Fred, did I tell you that in accordance with long-standing **BI** policy, submitting standby orders will get you a free issue? It sure as heck will. In any case, I would like to hear from all of you players about subscriptions by next time.
4. Enclosed with this issue, players should copies of “The Twelve Commandments” (my overly cute title for the **BI** houserules). *Please* read through them in their entirety (if you can’t stand this sort of thing, read a page every day, and it will be over before you know it), as they will supersede any previous houserules you may have been playing under. In fact, this season was adjudicated with them in force, and there were no problems (see how easy it is?).
5. Earlier in this section, I mentioned that I was planning to name **BI** games after “boroughs” (for lack of a better word) in my home city of Warsaw. Unfortunately, the map that I was planning to include didn’t make it into this issue, thanks to some reproduction problems. Rest assured, however, that you will receive this geography lesson in an upcoming issue, and that your games will soon have names with strange consonant combinations. I’ll bet you can’t wait.

For those of you who just don't trust this shady character posing as a reliable publisher, I present a

BI PROFILE: YOUR EDITOR

(Sorry, no baby pictures)

As I mentioned on the cover, I am indeed a student at one of this nation's great universities. Although universities are generally excellent places to play *Diplomacy*, publishing while attending one of them is not always a good idea. Papers, finals, and simple survival often take up enough time to preclude any activities remotely resembling "fun." I, however can count myself among those fortunate few whose lives sometimes extend beyond the classroom. After careful and prolonged soul-searching (between innings of the World Series), I have decided that I can afford to waste some of my free time (18 of the 24 hours each day in which I have nothing to do) by publishing this thing. (The other six hours I spend walking to and from campus.)

I must admit, however, that had I tried my hand at publishing last year, it would have been a disaster. One's first year of college is sometimes traumatic, and although my experience was not nearly so severe, I did learn a lot of things. Armed with this knowledge (and a word processor), I can make my jump into the publishing world with a great deal of confidence—confidence which I lacked a year ago. I won't go into extensive self-analysis in these pages (it would be too embarrassing), but I can say that I find this to be a very natural time to publish, and I hope that this is reflected in my writing.

Also on the cover, I mentioned that I am a second-year student in Slavic Languages & Literatures. This is not entirely accurate, as I am currently enrolled in the joint B.A./M.A. program in that department (with a concentration in Russian Language & Literature). This program offers me some excellent opportunities. Should I complete the program, I will have avoided the time and—especially—the expense involved in two years of graduate study. Should I decide that I want to study somewhere other than Chicago for my Master's, I can simply take one or two extra courses and finish my B.A. in three years (once again saving time and money). Lastly, should the coursework prove to be more than I can handle (in other words, should my inherent laziness get the best of me), I can take four years to complete my B.A. and make my final year very relaxing by taking only one or two courses.

My interest in Slavic matters stem partially from the fact that I am originally from Poland. In fact, I have a recurring fantasy of starting a Polish postal *Diplomacy* hobby, but, considering the current state of the country, I fear that this is impossible. A friend of mine who left Poland after I did sent one of his friends a copy of *Diplomacy*. I haven't heard anything since, and I don't even know whether the game got to him (getting wargames into the country is a very touchy matter), but if he received it, I hope he likes it. There is a small, active, competitive game organization in Warsaw, so perhaps he'll take it around. I must confess to being rather ignorant on the subject; I wish I could do something for them. I did get a copy of one of their games, called "Battle on the Sea of Winds", which is very inventive and well-done. In gratitude, I sent them copies of *Circus Maximus* and *Titan* (the safest games that I could think of, from a political standpoint), but I don't know whether or not they ever got there.

It would be untrue, however, to say that this background *entirely* accounts for my involvement in Slavic literatures. In my case, I credit my background with *introducing* me to the fascinating languages which comprise the Slavic branch. Exposure to English was a valuable experience. I feel very strongly that the Slavic languages are among the most beautiful in the world, and the literature written in them is without equal. Unfortunately, these languages lose much of their appeal upon translation, so that to truly appreciate them, one must read them in the original. In this sense, my education is very self-centered: the ability to read Russian and Czech would bring me an enormous amount of pleasure. Of the literally hundreds of works that I would like to read in the original, I have already read many in Polish translation (Slavic languages translate into one another much better than they translate into English!). To me, this is an opportunity which I would be a fool to waste.

Sadly, I have many other interests, and majoring in Slavic Languages precludes any real study of another subject. For instance, I am extremely interested in physics. However, the University of Chicago's Department of Physics regularly graduates the finest minds in the physical sciences (after all, we *did* split the atom first—even though the Manhattan Project was called what it was, it was done at the University of Chicago!). Recognizing the fact that I would probably not survive the physics curriculum here, I decided that it would be wise to pursue my strongest interests (for which I also have the most aptitude), and build my background in physics so that I may pursue an M.A. in the field at some later time. I do regret having to restrict my possible courses of action, but I suppose such choices are inevitable. In any case, I am happy with my choice.

My involvement in the various literatures is accompanied by strong interests in both history and politics although my interests run mainly in the academic, as opposed to practical, spectrum (note the distinction!). Foreign policy and international relations have always fascinated me, as one is often fascinated by that which he does not understand. This, however, has never prevented me from holding strong opinions on these matters, and readers are encouraged to debate with (and enlighten, if need be) their editor.

My other love (if I can call it that) is music. Once an oboist (of dubious talent), I have settled into a prolonged state of lament over the fact that I am not Heinz Holliger. In fact, my life would be very different had I been accepted at Julliard when I graduated from high school. Unfortunately, I was rejected, and haven't played a note since. Perhaps some day I will pick the instrument up again and remind myself how bad I was; for now, I will spare myself. Still, any discussions of music (the classical kind, please) will find a home here.

Of course, I will always welcome any discussion of literature. I won't delude myself into believing that many of you are interested in the same works I read, although if you are, I urge you to tell me about it. I am rather undereducated in the subject of English literature, though, so should any of you care to teach me a thing or two, go right ahead. I'd love to hear from you.

Lastly, I do dabble in wargames. Actually, "dabble" is not an accurate word—I was once rather heavily into them. Unfortunately, I have found that wargames are not very well-suited to postal play in cramped conditions. One needs room for maps and counters, as well as space to spread various game aids. The few apartments that I've had did not allow me these luxuries, so I was unable to play by mail at the level at which I had played when I lived at home. Consequently, I sort of dropped out of the postal wargame scene. I always found it depressing to pick up a copy of the *General* or *Fire & Movement* and realize that ten new games had appeared on the market, and that I was unable (for financial reasons) to buy any of them. Keeping up with wargames is difficult (when one is a collector, like me), since there are so many companies to keep track of. I still maintain my collection of about 150 games, however. In *The Arena* I said that I was not interested in running a conventional wargame in *BI*. What I was referring to were two-player games, such as *Battle of the Bulge* and *Russian Campaign*. However, I still enjoy multiplayer wargames, and wouldn't mind GM'ing one of those, should there be sufficient interest. My only requirement is that the game be of a reasonable size (in terms of board size and counter density). I have had some experience with biting off more than I could chew; I am absolutely determined that no such thing happen to *BI*. I have been playing wargames for almost eight years (I think I was introduced to *Luftwaffe* in sixth grade), and they have brought me continuous pleasure since then. I hope there are at least a few wargamers among you—I would love to maintain some contact with that wonderful hobby.

This "profile" has wandered quite a bit, though this does not worry me. Now that you know something about me and my interests, I hope that some of you find that your interests coincide at least a little with mine. If they do, I urge you to subscribe. If not, that's fine. In that case, though, I hope you'll still give *BI* a try. I do not plan to limit myself to what I am especially interested in (though that will make up most of the content of this thing). You are encouraged to share your interests with me. After all, I don't know everything (at least not yet).

macintalk

Depending on how much response this section gets, I may or may not make it a regular feature. Basically, I have become addicted to this wonderful thing called the Macintosh. The incredible ease with which one can write on this machine using a fairly simple word-processor is just incredible. By using Microsoft's *Word* and Apple's *MacDraw*, I can write and edit this entire 'zine without the mess of having the pages strewn all over a table, waiting to be collated. File management on computers is truly wonderful, as I'm sure many of you already know.

Due to some extraordinary luck at the beginning of last year, I got a job at the microcomputer lab in my residence hall (Chicago's euphemism for "dorm"), despite the fact that I was completely unfamiliar with the Macintosh (I had some knowledge of the IBM). Since that time, I have been "converted," if you will, to the following of this little machine. The lab is equipped with several Mac+'s (1Mg RAM, 128K ROM, w/internal double-sided disk drive), and a laser printer (an Apple LaserWriter), to which I have 24-hour access. All this makes for convenient printing, especially since my previously trusty electronic typewriter broke on me two weeks ago.

So hooked am I on this machine that I am contemplating buying a Macintosh of my own when I leave school this year. Laser-printing facilities can be found all over (just go to the nearest Kinko's), and one laser-printed copy of *BI* could easily be photocopied. Otherwise, I would have to do *BI* on my typewriter. Should that turn out to be necessary, however, I think that the experience I would have gained by that time in putting this thing out would make the switchover relatively painless. All that would be lost would be some physical quality, and, as is well known, no one reads 'zines because of their appearance.

What I am really interested in is the programming potential this machine has. UCSD Pascal (Apple's development language) is a wonderful tool. Macintosh Pascal is a real pleasure to use. Admittedly, I do not have much experience with Pascal (I was introduced to computers in the days when a good knowledge of BASIC and assembly language was all that was really necessary to get along with PC's), but I'm working on it. The major programming strength of the Mac, though, is the fact that some excellent C compilers have been produced for it. Now, I know next to nothing about C, but I am determined to rectify this deficiency. Specifically, when the lab gets its new C compiler, I am going to sit down and absolutely *force* myself to learn the basics of the language (this could get ugly). Does anyone know of a good book on beginning C for programmers who know only BASIC and Pascal? I will probably be using Lightspeed C, if that is of any help.

My other desire is to familiarize myself with Lisp. Unfortunately, this is more of a problem. Professional Lisp environments can cost megabucks, and I don't foresee the lab getting anything better than xLisp for a long time. Still, I don't think this will stop me. Is there someone out there familiar with xLisp who might let me know what I'm getting into?

In short, I would be very interested in hearing from the programmers among you, especially those who have, at one time or another, programmed on a Macintosh. What sort of programs did you write, and what did you use them for? Those people who have had the chance to program on other machines are asked to contribute their experiences. How does the Macintosh compare to the other machines? What are it's strengths and weaknesses relative to them. Which machine do you like better?

I've noticed from reading other 'zines that several of you have come up with adjudication programs for *Diplomacy*. Now, being a beginning GM, I wouldn't want to deprive myself of the pleasure (!) of getting some experience in running a game by post, so I wouldn't use such a program in *BI*. However, I would be fascinated to see how these programs are put together, whether in BASIC or in Pascal (or any other language, for that matter). Perhaps I could make that my next programming (and

I don't have many of those). Would anyone care to assist me? I would hate to spend the rest of my life playing only computer games....

SPEAKING OF GAMES...

One thing that has been interfering with the completion of this 'zine is a gem of a game by Mindscape called *Balance of Power*. If you haven't seen it, it's really beyond description. Basically, it is a computer geopolitical simulation of amazing realism. A player plays either the USA or the USSR, and attempts to win as much prestige for his country as possible by interacting with the "lesser" nations. The game is played on a map of the world depicting 62 different countries. The options open to the player are truly mind-boggling. During the course of a turn, a player may make treaties, send military and economic aid, intervene, destabilize, and exert diplomatic pressure. Once the player does this (and he may perform as many actions as he wishes), he challenges the computer's actions. In each case, the computer responds by either backing down or escalating the crisis. Escalation eventually leads to nuclear war (the end of the game) if a player is not careful. The process is then reversed, and the computer challenges the player. The game proceeds to the next turn (year), and this sequence is repeated.

Much of the strategy depends on watching what countries are susceptible to takeover (usually by diplomatic means), and knowing which actions a player can get away with (and which actions he can't!). An enormous number of factors must be taken into account while playing, including spheres of influence, diplomatic relationships, coups, finlandization, insurgency, revolutions, and civil war. This tremendous data flow gives the computer a slight edge over the beginning player, who may have a hard time assimilating it all. Eventually, though, a player becomes accustomed to watching for danger signs, and can concentrate on out-thinking the machine. (There is also a two-player option, which makes for some fascinating diplomatic exchanges, such as, "Nuke me and I'll break your head." The game also becomes a little more realistic, as few players are willing to end the game because of the other player established diplomatic relations with Mali.)

The map allows for an excellent graphic representation of the game's major factors. So much information is packed into *Balance of Power* that it would take many more pages than I have available to describe it fully. Let it suffice to say that I have been looking for a global simulation of this sort ever since I realized that a computer had the potential to do it. There were a few attempts at this made in the days when computers in the home were relatively new. I remember one particular attempt for the Pet/CBM, which had no graphics (all text), and included only two "hypothetical superpowers." After years of fruitless searching, I gave up. Victory Games did come out with a game that almost fulfilled my expectations, called *Cold War*, but that is a multiplayer game which requires many more people than I can find at any one time, and much more time than I can afford to spend. When I saw *BOP*, I nearly fell over. Political science enthusiasts should gobble this one up. If you have a Macintosh, and feel the urge to spend a bit of money on a luxury for yourself (\$39.95, I think), you can't really go wrong with this one.



"In this house lived the best friend of the lady who had just arrived. The author is at his wits' end how to name the two ladies in such a way as to avoid making people angry with him, as they were in the past. To call them by a fictitious name is dangerous: whatever name you think of, there's sure to be in some corner of our empire, seeing how vast it is, someone of the same name who is quite certain to become terribly angry and declare that the author has deliberately paid a secret visit to his town in order to find out what sort of sheepskin he wears, or what food he enjoys best. If you were to give them, which God forbid, their ranks, it is even more dangerous. For nowadays people of all ranks and classes in our country are so sensitive that they think everything in a book refers to them personally. It is enough to say that in a certain town there is a stupid man and it is already interpreted as a personal reference to someone."

Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, tr. David Magarshack (New York: Penguin, 1982).

the courier

Letter columns rival filler as my favorite part of 'zines. While I find some letter topics more interesting than others, I consistently find that the presence of intelligent, organized debate (or even some of the other kind) can induce me to read about subjects that I would otherwise ignore. Letters, to me, are the heart of a 'zine, as they give a real insight into the personalities of its readers, which are at least as important as the personality of the publisher in forming a 'zine's character.

With this auspicious beginning, I hereby announce the opening of *The Courier*, *BI*'s forum for the discussion of topics deemed vital to the survival of mankind (in other words, juicy gossip). Being a little wary of the implications of exposing *BI*'s pages to all sorts of mad ravings, I think I should establish a few groundrules in order to clarify exactly what sort of missives I shall permit to grace these pages. These, then, shall henceforth be called

The *Blunt Instruments* Editorial Policies

(Looks great in boldface, doesn't it?)

Topics I don't want to state explicitly what topics I want to discuss, as I don't want to squelch your creativity. Admittedly, I have some rather specific interests, but I wouldn't want anyone to try to get in my good graces by writing about them (hint, hint). Elsewhere in this 'zine you will certainly find ample indication of what these interests are, and if they coincide with yours, great. Write. As I said in the introduction to this section, intelligent, well-reasoned letters have a better chance of being printed than poorly written attacks on my character. Compliments on my publication are always welcome, and have a good chance of being printed in their entirety, with the author's name in big, bold letters.

The only topic which will not have any place here is feuding of any sort. I am quite proud of the fact that I am fairly ignorant of the circumstances of the larger feuds in this hobby, as this makes me the best sort of impartial observer (ignorant and silent.). Any attempts to enlighten me on this subject will be returned to the sender with nasty comments attached. How would you like to be referred to in this 'zine for the rest of your life in tiny lettering?

Length The length of both the column and the individual letters will pretty much be determined by reader response. If you send it in, I'll try to print it as soon as possible. However, there are limits, both to the amount of typing that I am willing to do and to the amount of extra money I am willing to pay in order to cover the additional postage costs when the letter column has to come out in a three-volume set. Priority will be given to letters which refer to current events (and, therefore, need to be printed soon in order to retain their timeliness), and letters which continue a theme set in previous letters. I would like to establish a theme for each particular letter column. Letters of a more general nature will be printed as I have room. The only exception will be letters received in response to this first issue. Should you readers respond to the point where I cannot fit everything into one issue, I will space the letters throughout the next few issues, making sure to print everyone's submission.

Editing My favorite part. Anyone that writes something that I don't agree with will simply have their opinion [*replaced by my own comments*]. Cash included with your letter will decrease the number of deletions. Seriously, I will try to print all letters in their entirety. I *will* edit, however, if the letter column is unusually long, and an unusual number of letters merit inclusion in that issue (due to timeliness, etc.). I will try to convey the gist of your argument; however, letters that address both the current topic of discussion and some unrelated items will have the unrelated items edited (although they will most likely appear in the next issue).

Tied to this category is organization. I don't particularly care for the system of splitting letters up and grouping them by subject, thereby robbing them of any character they once had (as you can see, I am a firm believer in the contributions of the reader to the character of a 'zine.). Letters to *The Courier* will not be dismembered.

Response: [*The editor's comments will be printed in italics and enclosed in brackets.*]

Criticism: If you don't like something, please be nice. It makes it easier on me when I have to defend myself (or admit that I screwed up).

Those, then, are the guidelines. Those of you that expected rigid definitions of what the *BI* letter column would consist of have probably been disappointed. I deliberately avoided making them too specific, though, as I want to see how readers respond to this. It would be quite embarrassing to say, "This letter column will *never* exceed five pages," and be confronted with an Issue #2 letter section which barely fills two. I'll use my judgment. Be assured that if you write, I will try to print your letter in the upcoming issue (assuming there is time). Other than that, what can I say?

Articles

Although, not the same as letter-writing, article-writing does consist of submissions to the editor, and is best dealt with here. In short, I will accept all articles relating to *Diplomacy* whether they deal with tactics, psychology, humor, or anything else. My requirements are two:

1. The article must be related to *Diplomacy*, or a game currently being run in *BI*.
2. The article must be well-written, in proper English, observing all of the rules of modern English grammar and usage.

Should I accept your article for publication, I will pay you with free issues, monetary compensation, or both. The amount of compensation will generally depend on the length (and quality) of the article, and some intangibles, such as the timeliness of the submission (and, of course, whether or not I like you).

I will always be eager to accept article submissions, and compensation will be correspondingly generous. I am particularly looking for articles of a serious, scholarly nature, addressing some of the more complex aspects of *Diplomacy*. I am not looking for humor in any form. I, the editor, am the sole source of humor in this 'zine, and any attempt to introduce your own brand of humor into these pages will indicate a dissatisfaction with mine. (Actually, you can write about whatever facet of the game you like. Humor will be accepted, and *perhaps* even encouraged [goodness!]. It can get very boring constantly laughing at one's own jokes!)



ACCORDING TO THE BOOK....

It has been several months now since Bruce Linsey's Publisher's Handbook, also known by the creative name of *Once Upon a Deadline*, came out. I won't spend my time reviewing it here (except to say that I probably couldn't have done *BI* without it), as many other publishers have reviewed it already (although I will mention that every review I have seen has been excellent).

What is missing from these reviews, however, is the perspective of a publisher who actually used the Handbook in the process of starting to publish. Since I am one of the first publishers to start up since the Good Book appeared, I think it would be interesting to relate exactly how the Publisher's Handbook contributed the creation of *BI*. Sound interesting? Next time, gentle readers, next time....

amusements

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of seeing the movie *Closely Watched Trains* (1966), a Czech film of the revolutionary New Wave period of the 'Sixties, directed by the great Jirí Menzel. The film concerns a young man named Milos Hrma, who goes to work at a railroad depot in Czechoslovakia during the German occupation. The plot, which takes the deceptive form of a simple sabotage story, explores a young man's sexual awakening and the terrors of *ejaculatio præcox*, which drives the hero to an unsuccessful suicide attempt. The film ends with the destruction of a German munitions train by Hrma, although he is killed in the attack. Brilliant, intense, and politically dangerous, the film was accused of being defamatory towards the anti-Nazi resistance. It won an Oscar for Menzel, which prompted the Soviet authorities to accuse him of "plotting with the Hollywood Zionists."

In fact, Czech cinema has produced many outstanding films and filmmakers, although very few Americans are aware of this. The New Wave of the 'Sixties brought a storm of acclaim to Czech cinema, which had been quietly producing masterpieces for several decades. The New Wave, however, was the first real exposure of the West to Czech films, which explains why the West was so taken aback by the quality of Czech productions.

Those of you that have seen the immensely popular *Amadeus* may be aware that the director of that film was a man by the name of Milos Forman. What you may not know is the fact that Forman was one of Czechoslovakia's greatest directors, having directed, among other films, the masterpiece *The Firemen's Ball*, which remains one of the greatest political metaphors in Czech cinema. This film brought Forman recognition as a social critic *par excellence*—a title which no one had thought to bestow on him previously—and silenced his critics who had attempted to tear down his magnificent *Loves of a Blond* by claiming that its only appeal was that of a trite, overused cliché: the story of a young girl in love. Needless to say, this was not true, although this did not prevent those who envied Forman (besides his obvious talent, he was married to the greatest female Czech screen star of the time) from deriding him all the same.

Forman's films, in the words of Josef Skvorecky, "speak both to the man in the street, and the intellectual." This is high praise for a man in an environment where so many films went one way or the other. (Alfréd Radok's *The Long Journey* (1949) is probably the best example that I can use for a film going off the artistic deep end.) In doing so, he gave rise to a "pseudo-school" of New Wave cinema (the only director of the New Wave to inspire this). Ivan Passer and Jaroslav Papousek, two of his collaborators on earlier films (Forman made many joint-effort productions), displayed their respective talents in later films, made without Forman's help.

Forman's *Amadeus* was not done without the help of some friends; the credits reveal a host of decidedly Czech names. I have not kept up with Forman's recent filmmaking in the United States (if, indeed, there has been any), but I can only hope that his future works are as successful as his Czech efforts. I wondered at one point whether his genius could sustain the level of art he set for himself in Czechoslovakia, when working out of his milieu. My silly fears were obviously proven false.

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Amusements is this editor's reserved space for babble about his most cherished interests: literature, drama, and music (roughly in that order). Complaints about 'zine-induced boredom will not be enough to eliminate this column, although they will make me curtail it somewhat. For this reason, the first installment was mercifully short. Subsequent columns may include further (more detailed) looks at classic cinema, my impressions of Milan Kundera's novel *Life Is Elsewhere*, and a review of a recent performance of Eugene O'Neill's play *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Stay tuned (or tune out)....

Awright, Geryk, whadd'ya think yer doin' with yer

HOUSERULES?!

Inevitably, when a new 'zine appears, the publisher must dutifully enclose with his samples copies of his houserules. This is so that players may (presumably) read through them before deciding to join one of that 'zine's games. Unfortunately, houserules rarely make for stimulating reading, so, more often than not, they are left unread. This can cause severe headaches, both for the player and the GM, when a dispute arises over a houserule that the player was unaware of. When disputes of this sort overshadow the game with which they are connected, much (if not all) of the fun involved in the game vanishes.

Unfortunately, I cannot afford a huge mass mailing of 200+ houserules, only fourteen of which are going to be used (as I have opened two games). Consequently, only players in 1985AQ will receive copies of the houserules with this mailing. Once the other games are filled, I shall provide the new players with the houserules, and make them available to anyone else who wants to see them. If you sign up for a game and subsequently find, upon reading the houserules, that you want out, you are welcome to leave (as long as the game hasn't started yet, that is). Inserted with these samples is a one-page set of "highlights," noting the most important houserules. Most of them are standard, so there should be little problem (I hope!).

Only one of these is at all "revolutionary," and that is the rule concerning the consequences of NMR's. Instead of holding, units repeat their moves of the previous season. Likewise, missed builds are dealt with by repeating the builds of the previous Winter season (if possible). In this way, I hope to lessen the effect of NMR's on the flow of a game. Of course, if an army moves, say, Mun-Bur (successfully) one season and the player NMR's in the next, the army in Burgundy will hold, since the previous order for it would now be invalid. What this system is intended to do, though, is preserve supports, especially mutual supports by a small country under attack by several neighbors. Normally, an NMR in such a situation would destroy the position entirely. Under this system, the attackers would benefit much less from the NMR, for the supports holding them off would still (largely) exist.

This is not my idea—Mark Berch suggested it in the "Gamemastering" book of *Once Upon a Deadline*. I like it, though, because it reduces the benefits of NMR's in many situations. Obviously, the large power on the move will still be stopped dead in its tracks, for the most part, by an NMR, though an NMR in such a situation is less likely than in the example mentioned in the previous paragraph. Many games are made exciting by the tenacious defence of a small country to the last unit. Conversely, games can be ruined when a player decides that he would rather drop out than play out his position to its full potential as a deciding factor in the outcome. Mark's "War by Automatic Pilot" system is an excellent one, I feel, for taking the edge off a particularly ill-timed drop.

Purists will argue, of course, that units orders for one season are only good for *that season*. An NMR means no orders were received at all, so if the units in question were not ordered, the couldn't move; the GM has no right to decide what orders shall be used should a player not submit orders for his units. In other words, the GM is interfering.

I, frankly, am anxious to try out this new system, and I hope that others are, too. However, with any innovation there are likely to be differing opinions, so we might as well discuss them. On this topic, then, I am opening BI's first "round table" forum. If you have any comments regarding the merits of this system, the old system, or a revolutionary system you've just devised, I want to hear them. Is there a better way of doing this?

Certain decisions in one's life can give one a valuable insight into one's priorities. Just such an occasion occurred last week. With mid-terms coming up in a few weeks, your intrepid editor decided it was time to take a much-needed vacation, and set out one windy Thursday morning from downtown Chicago, headed for

BRUXCON/TOMATOCON '86

(in Newfane, Vermont)

Unfortunately, my trip had a rather ominous beginning. The original plan was for me to leave Chicago at six o'clock Thursday evening (October 23d), switch buses in Cleveland, and arrive in Albany at one in the afternoon on Friday, to get a ride to Paul Gardner's house with Mike Barno. However, the bus I was on ended up breaking down halfway between Toledo and Cleveland. The result was that I missed the connection, and spent five long hours in the Cleveland bus station waiting for the next bus out. Eventually, I got to Albany at nine on Friday night, where I was greeted by Bruce Linsey and Bruce McIntyre. This carload of Bruces proceeded to the Albany airport, to be joined by Steve and Linda Courtemanche. From there, it was on to Brux's mother's house, where hefty portions of pizza awaited your by-now starving editor.

Along with the pizza came an introduction to *Survive!*, a relatively simple yet quite interesting game by Parker Brothers which ended up being the surprise hit of the con. The center of the contest is a sinking tropical island, made up of individual hexagonal tiles, on which are printed one of three types of terrain: sand, jungle, or rock. The tiles are set up at random within a predetermined area in the middle of the board, which is surrounded by open water. On these tiles, the players place their tokens, which represent people trapped on the island. Each token has a point value printed on the underside. The object is to get the tokens off the island and onto dry land before the island sinks completely. Each turn, a player may move his tokens by swimming or by boat. After each turn, the players remove one tile, which is considered to have sunk beneath the waves. On the underside of each tile are printed various events, such as whale or shark appearance, dolphin assistance, and the like. The players must make their way through the sharks, whales, whirlpools, and sea monsters before the tile with the volcanic explosion printed on it is removed, ending the game. Steve, Brux, McBruce, and I played a game, which I happened to win, which figures, as I was the only person who hadn't played before. Before long, we were off again, this time to Brux's apartment, where, after another game of *Survive!* and a perusal of several back issues of *The Voice of Doom*, I managed to go to sleep, despite the fact that I had just slept for about twelve hours on the bus.

Early Friday morning, we packed ourselves into Brux's car and drove to Pittsfield to pick up Steve Hutton and Alan Stewart at the bus station. From there, all seven (!) of us made the trip to Paul Gardner's. Seven people made for quite a full car, but no one seemed to mind, and a quick stop for breakfast at Dot's Restaurant (don't ask me which hamlet it was in, as I lost track eventually) refreshed all of us weary travellers. From there, it was but a short hop to the site of the festivities, where I was determined that I would play at least one game of *Titan*.

The festivities were in full swing indeed, as was evidenced by the smoke pouring out of Paul's house. Well, not exactly *pouring*, but there was enough to prevent us from going into the house for a few minutes. Apparently, shortly before we arrived, the fireplace decided to malfunction, causing the smoke to go everywhere except where it was supposed to (up the chimney). Consequently, when Steve Hutton, Alan Stewart, Mike Barno, and I decided to play *Survive!* (again), we did so outside on a picnic table. Outside, I made the acquaintance of Gary Coughlan, Simon Billeness, and Dave Lincoln. The chill air did not seem to affect Alan's play, and he made short work of the rest of us (although Steve came close to beating him at the end). Other hardy souls had a go at frisbee, although by the time the *Survive!* game ended, the frisbee players were nowhere to be seen.

Shortly afterward, I joined an *Axis & Allies* game in progress, in which Dave Lincoln's daughter Rebecca was doing quite well as Germany. Allen Wells was bearing the brunt of the attack as Russia, while Dave's son Bryan was fighting a valiant defensive action as Britain. I switched places with Dave, who was sitting in as the United States, and was under attack from John Rigley's Japan. Try as

we might, there was just no stopping John and Rebecca, and we eventually conceded the game to a victorious Axis alliance.

At this point, I was all set to lose myself in *Titan* for several hours. However, Allen Wells and several others were pushing for *Diplomacy*, and after a dramatic die roll, it was decided that *Diplomacy* would be next on the agenda. Drawing Russia, I proceeded to let Austria (Michael Ward) and Turkey (Arye Gittelman) waltz all over me (for which I earned Allen Wells' enduring enmity, as his Germany ended up having to fend off my units for no good reason). At this point, Russ Rusnak suggested a *Titan* game for anyone who cared to play, and I gleefully suicided in anticipation of some serious legion-stomping. My last army died in Tyrolia in 1903. This had taken a while, though, and by the time I was free, Russ had decided to take a nap (we Midwesterners are a wild bunch!), and I was left without a *Titan* opponent.

Ironically (from my point of view), a "blind" Gunboat *Diplomacy* game was forming, and I volunteered to GM. The players were: Jeff Zarse (Austria), Tom de Graaf (England), Dave Lincoln (France), Alan Stewart (Germany), Gary Coughlan (Italy), Steve Hutton (Russia), and Ron Krukowski (Turkey). The game progressed quickly, as the players had only five minutes in which to write orders. After several hours of intense play, the game ended in Fall, 1909 in a three-way draw between Germany (ten centers), France, and Turkey (both at eight). Gary Coughlan was probably bored for most of the game, as his Italy was knocked out in 1904, yet he had to stay at the board and continue to submit orders to preserve the "blind" aspect of the game. He hid it well, however, as his orders either contained orders for other countries (which actually succeeded in fooling me once, when I couldn't tell the difference between his handwriting and Steve Hutton's and consequently retreated a Russian unit incorrectly—Steve, of course, couldn't protest) or humorous messages. Mike Barno joined us as England after Tom had to leave. It was a lot of fun at the end when the players actually wrote down their guesses as to who played which country. I don't have the actual written guesses, but believe me when I say that some players were quite a bit off the mark!

The game was momentarily interrupted for dinner, which consisted of "Uncle Brux's Special Spaghetti" (for which large quantities of his "secret formula" sauce had been frozen and shipped to Paul's before the con), which was quite unique and tasty, and Simon Billeness' Vegetarian Chili, which reaffirmed my belief that meat is often a completely unnecessary ingredient in many dishes. Simon's chili was simply fantastic, and I am kicking myself for not secretly photographing the ingredients list when he briefly showed it to me. Simon, the chili was incredible! How about trading that recipe for some sub credit?

Also available were massive quantities of pickles, provided courtesy of Bruce Linsey, who obviously knew that the success of a con is directly proportional to the amount of pickled cucumbers on hand for general consumption. I had several, but I can assure you that had there been no chili or spaghetti, we could have had a hearty meal consisting solely of pickles, and had some left over for breakfast.

After the Gunboat game, Simon, Alan Stewart, Jeff Zarse, Steve Hutton, Mike Barno, and I played a couple of games of Mayfair's *Family Business*, a quick-playing card game of mob warfare in which one tries to be the last gang to survive while killing off the other players' gangsters. Each player's hand contains offensive and defensive cards, the optimum balance of which is paramount to winning play. Players try to put other players' gangsters on the "hit list," which puts them in deadly peril should a mob war begin. Play flows smoothly from player to player, and a well-placed defensive card can swing the momentum in that player's favor. Alan and I each won one game, although (obviously) much depends on the simple luck of a player's cards.

The chances for a *Titan* game on Saturday became very slim indeed when Ron Krukowski announced the opening of a massive *Circus Maximus* game. Ron had brought with him a huge, table-sized mapboard and a slew of beautiful hand-painted miniature chariots. To my memory, thirteen people played, though far fewer chariots than that actually finished. The players (as in any *Circus Maximus* game) were divided into two categories: those that wanted to drive fast, and those that wanted to crush other chariots. The "heavies" of the latter category generally give up their chances of winning, though they are usually instrumental in determining which of the light chariots survive to get across the finish line. Attrition in the game changes the place standings radically as the game progresses, as was

evidenced by the fact that I, with the benefit of exceptionally sturdy horses (74 endurance points) found myself in first place about two-thirds of the way through the game after a rather mediocre start. Unfortunately, the incessant whipping to which I had subjected my horses throughout the race and the beating which they had taken from the "enforcer" chariots of Russ Rusnak and Peter Mateunas finally caught up with me, as my first horse was killed in the final straightaway. This allowed Jeff Zarse to speed past me into first place and an eventual win a few minutes later. As always, the winner was the one who managed to be as unobtrusive as possible and avoid being attacked, as Jeff clearly showed. No one really even knew he was in contention for the win until the final lap, which I'm sure was to Jeff's great delight. Anyway, by then it was almost two in the morning, I was suffering from the shock of having watched the Red Sox throw away Game Six of the World Series due to Bill Buckner's misplay at first base, and I quietly slipped off to sleep (which I almost did several times during the game itself).

By the next morning I was quite refreshed, although I knew I couldn't get into any long games since I had to leave Albany by five o'clock that evening if I were to make it back to Chicago in time for my Monday afternoon classes. I did get a chance to play one more game of *Survive!* with Nelson Heintzman, and Dave and Rebecca Lincoln. Thanks to a setup which hindered the movement of the sea creatures, we were all able to save more of our pieces than usual. I saved the most and won the game. After this, I wandered over to the boxes of 'zines sitting on a table, and spent a peaceful morning reading through some vintage copies of *Excelsior*, *Europa Express*, and several others.

At about one o'clock, it was time for me to head back to Chicago. Bruce Linsey was kind enough to drive me and the Courtemanches back to Albany, and we indulged in an informal game of *Scuples* on the way, which simply consisted of our reading the questions to one another and defending our answers. We made a short stop at McDonald's for lunch, where Brux became *BI*'s first official subscriber by earning two issues of sub credit by buying lunch for this editor-to-be (thanks, Bruce!). After that, it was off to the Greyhound station, whence I departed on the long journey home (which, thankfully, did not take another twenty-six hours).

BRUCXON/TOMATOCON '86 was a truly delightful experience. The turnout was excellent, and I think I am safe in saying that everyone had a wonderful time. My warmest thanks go to Paul Gardner and Bruce Linsey for organising such a stupendous gathering, and to Bruce for providing transportation both to and from Paul's (as well as his generous gift of Mayfair's *Jerusalem*). My memory fails me when trying to remember everyone who attended, but that does not mean they were anything less than splendid company. Next year, I'm going to be at DipCon '87 in Madison, and I hope to see many of you again. This time there won't be any marathon bus rides for me.



Your editor is hitting himself over the head. No, he is not going off the deep end; he simply realised that something he did a few years ago was rather stupid, and he is currently indulging in some self-remonstration. Perhaps the readers of *BI* can be of some assistance.

Up until a couple of years ago, I owned SPI's *Empire of the Middle Ages*. Even though I enjoyed the game immensely, I managed to trade it to a collector for a few less-noteworthy games. Recently, I realised how stupid this had been, and have been trying to locate it through various sources, but to no avail. I still want it as much as ever, and am willing to pay a hefty price. If anyone out there has a copy which he is willing to part with for a king's ransom, or knows where a copy might be had, please contact me. I am very anxious to make up for my error. Here's your chance to earn this editor's everlasting gratitude (and a finder's fee, should you be able to locate it for me!).

Similarly, Avalon Hill's *Source of the Nile* has gone out of print, and I was not prudent enough to obtain a copy of that game while it was still available. Could anyone connect me with a copy of *SOTN* that needs a good home?

the soapbox

The Soapbox is this 'zine's attempt at a forum for discussion (in a polite, civilised manner, I hope) of political and social issues. Prone as this editor is to bombasticism, readers should be reassured that despite whatever evidence there is to the contrary, their responses will be treated in a fair and evenhanded manner, and will be printed so as to best foster intelligent debate. The operative word here is "intelligent" (although this editor may sometimes be excepted from this requirement), and to this end I hope to be able to provide some impetus for letter-writing. This department will probably become indistinguishable from *The Courier*, simply due to the way in which letters intermingle. We'll see what happens.

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By the time you read this, most of you will have settled down from your initial states of joy/lament/indifference (choose one) over the resounding Democratic victory in the Congressional elections of last week. I, for one, was quite relieved that the general "rightist" swing of the country seems to have been checked (at least for the moment), although every time I turn around someone is claiming to have a "mandate from the masses" or some such nonsense. This time, however, I think everyone is agreed that we have witnessed a watershed (of sorts) in American politics. The "faddishness" of Republicanism has proven itself to have been (at least in part) just that, and I, for one, am glad to see that Americans are recoiling from the danger of socio-political extremism. From all appearances, the Democratic Party is nowhere near as "unfashionable" as many of us had been led to believe. This comes as a profound relief to your editor, who was just getting over the shock of realising that there are people who take Pat Robertson's presidential aspirations seriously.

Conservatives are already making up excuses for their poor showing. William Safire wrote an interesting column on the subject which, although rather tongue-in-cheek, ended up making a half-hearted case for various explanations of the conservative collapse. I acknowledge the validity of some of his points—the incredible expectations that the public had of the power structure were destined to be crushed, as are any unrealistic expectations which accompany a radical change in government. Reagan was supposed to be the savior of both America and the world, but while he may still retain much of the faith that the people originally had in him, the same faith is no held for his ideological compatriots. In the words of William Safire: "Conservatives should wake up to the realization that no one can purchase the farm vote. Tens of billions in increased subsidies, on top of a craven withdrawal of the grain embargo, won the Republicans little loyalty in the farm belt; that vote will go illogically against whoever is in, as long as failing farmers are given taxpayer support unavailable to other small businesses." One cannot help but wonder how much of this "illogic" extends to other sectors.

Such indicators do not, however, detract from the evidence pointing to a repudiation of the radical right ideologues which seemed to be so much in tune with current political thought. It cannot be a coincidence that Senators Mattingly of Georgia, Denton of Alabama, and Moore of Florida, all vocal conservatives, were replaced so decisively. In addition, Reagan's policies, which had their praises sung so loudly in the previous election by anyone on the Republican ticket, were noticeably absent from this election's GOP rhetoric. According to Anthony Lewis: "...the Republicans who won in tough races did not campaign on Reagan ideology.... Rather, the Republican winners tended to talk about the need for better education, more protection for the environment, industrial development [etc.]"—Democratic notions, by-and-large. What we may be seeing here is a "centering" tendency not only in the nation as a whole, but within the Republican party as well, as the GOP tries to retract the bold rhetoric of the early 'Eighties which, as it turns out, was a trifle less widely accepted than it first appeared. Just as the conservatives were crowing about the supposed "transformation" of the American electorate into a new, conservative entity, they have been proven wrong. I cannot help but be reminded of Alan Stewart's response to a recent letter of mine in *Praxis* which excoriated The Honorable William Rehnquist for his alleged "conservatism": "Rehnquist's political beliefs...are the

same as those of the President of the United States, who less than two years ago finished kicking the Democrats' ass up and down these great United States, that being not the first but the second landslide he had won, the first against an incumbent President. Sometimes I think that the Democrats could keep nominating McGovern-Mondale types for the next fifty years, getting maybe, oh, one hundred and twenty or one hundred and fifty electoral votes in all twelve elections combined, and still continue to denounce the winners as 'extremists.'" I think that this election has made it quite clear that the Democrats are very capable of "kicking some ass" themselves, and that the "great brainwashing of America" which, in the minds of the conservatives, had seemed to have been so overwhelmingly successful, was really mostly in their minds.

In addition to this, the "Reagan effect" finally backfired. Senator George Mitchell of Maine summarized this by saying that the Republicans' "overwhelming emphasis on President Reagan in the final weeks had the effect of trivializing their campaign, making it appear that their candidates couldn't stand on their own." Had this been a quote from an actual voter, my faith in the general intelligence of humanity might have been raised a notch or two. In at least one gubernatorial race—the one in my "adopted" home state of Michigan (where my family settled after we moved from Poland)—the ploy of having the President appear on behalf of the Republican candidate, William Lucas, effectively confirmed the general suspicion that his position was so poor as to need to resort to this "grandstanding," an opinion which was echoed even within his own party. (For the record, the incumbent Democratic governor, James Blanchard, ended up winning by the ridiculous margin of 69% to 31%).

These opinions may come as a mild shock to those of you who are used to hearing nothing but praise for Ronald Reagan from anyone who has spent any time on the "other side" of the Iron Curtain. My partial immunity to anti-Soviet hysteria (although, I must admit, I harbor very strong feelings towards them, few of them good) is probably due to the fact that, in addition to having spent too little time there to acquire the pure, deep-seated hatred that Poles have for their eastern neighbors, I was fortunate enough to be the son of two "intellectuals" (let me just point out here that in Poland, this term does not have precisely the same connotation as it does here, and, in any case, I would apply that description to my parents without hesitation) who, in general, do not make the mistake of idealizing the West in the way that the majority of the Poles tends to do. The result, which I won't belabor you with here (I've done enough belaboring for the next ten issues!), is an essentially moderate domestic and rightist foreign stance. The psychology of such beliefs can be elaborated on in later installments of this section.

The verdict on the past, however, remains in question. Without a doubt, some political historians will categorize it as the final manifestations of a cycle of agony induced by Vietnam and its aftermath. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's claim that "We have exorcised the war, the riots, the rhetoric—and thank God. That time is over" may be a bit too optimistic. Fortunately for all of us, we live in a country where such statements aren't looked upon as the ravings of dreamers. We can thank the kind graces of geography for that.



Becoming a publisher includes one drawback beside which others pale to insignificance: that of filler. The new publisher is suddenly faced with a problem previously not encountered: what to do with extra white space at the bottom of a page which cannot be constructively filled. Personally, I don't understand what all the fuss is about. After all, what's the difference between some blank space at the bottom of a page, and several lines of unintelligible gibberish? Both are equally worthless, but the blank space saves the reader the time involved in figuring out what to skip over. Consequently, whenever a space appears in BI which I cannot adequately fill, I will just leave it blank. I will never resort to filler to take up extra space. Never.

Here they are, in a Reader's Digest version even President Reagan could sink his teeth into

THE 2¹/₂ COMMANDMENTS

(don't worry—an explanation follows)

In lieu of a full set of houserules, I have opted instead for this one-page outline sheet which should give potential players a general idea of what they are getting themselves into. Copies will be available to the general public in exchange for a SASE until the games are filled, after which time they will be free upon request. Each player in the two new sections of *Diplomacy* will receive a full set of houserules with the issue announcing the gamestarts.

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- You must sub to play (orphans excepted).
- Country selection will be by preference list. Those that submit preference lists will be assigned countries before those that do not. Preference lists will be published.
- The Spring, 1901 deadline will be two issues after the issue in which the gamestart is announced. All players will have interim orders due, at which time they may vote to start the game early. NMR's at interim will result in a standby being called. Neutral orders will not be used, as standbys will be called as necessary until seven sets of orders are received for Spring, 1901.
- Combination of seasons will be Autumn/Winter/Spring and Summer/Fall. Fall and Winter of 1901 will always be separated. Other separation of seasons will be granted only at the request of *at least* half of the surviving players.
- Deadlines will be four weeks apart.
- You may telephone your orders to the GM. The GM will not telephone players for orders.
- "Nor" as an abbreviation will be ignored.
- This stuff about "hold & support" is ridiculous. Units ordered to "hold & support" will be considered to be double-ordered.
- Each unit must be given a separate order; parenthesized/combined/implied orders will not be accepted.
- NMR'ing units will not hold. Instead, they will repeat orders of the previous season. Should a unit's position have changed due to a successful move during the previous season, that unit will hold. Missed builds/removals will repeat builds/removals of the previous Winter (as far as possible).
- If you drop out of one game (not resign), you drop out of them all, and lose your sub in the process.
- Press of (almost) any length will be printed. The GM may edit in the case of obscenity, tastelessness, and feud potential. Only white press will be allowed.
- All votes must be unanimous. If you don't vote, I'll assume you vote "no." All votes are confidential, but a player may make his vote public by requesting the GM to publish it.
- Disputes, should they reach a stage where arbitration is necessary, will be resolved by a GM-chosen arbitrator, although the player involved can veto one such choice.

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Those are the "highlights," as it were. I hope this gives you a good idea of what the rest are like. Oh, why is this called "The 2¹/₂ Commandments"? Well, the full set is called "The Twelve Commandments" (referring to the twelve major sections of the houserules), and I thought I'd make a silly joke.